

Ramping It Up

By Dr. Michael Fedak, Esse Health Internal Medicine Physician

Okay, so you've been walking for about one month now and you are ready to ramp it up a bit. You have a lot of options.

If you like walking, and have the time, you can always increase the time and distance you walk. The problem is you can only burn so many calories per minute walking, so unless you have a fair amount of time to devote to walking, you may want to increase the intensity of your exercise to burn more calories per minute.

If you like the outdoors, and don't suffer from arthritis, jogging is an excellent way to burn calories. All the equipment you really need is a good pair of shoes. It helps to have a good running surface, so if you live near a high school or college campus, run on their track. If not, roads or sidewalks will do, but they may bother your knees and ankles more.

If you have a membership to a gym, the options multiply. Upright bicycles, reclining bicycles, treadmills, elliptical machines, stair climbers, rowing machines and swimming are all very efficient calorie burners and are easier on your joints than jogging on a hard surface. Depending on your pace, you could burn 8 to 14 calories per minute on these machines, which is much more efficient than walking (5 to 6 calories per minute).

You could also add variety to your workouts by considering a Zumba class, Cardio-karate, aerobic dancing, or spinning. Check with your local YMCA or other fitness center. Just remember to start out slow. These classes can be grueling, but eventually, you may be able to burn 800 calories per hour during a class. Inform the instructor if you have arthritis or any heart or lung issues. He or she can help modify some of the movements for you.

Don't belong to a gym? Check out your local Target or Walmart's DVD section. There are hundreds of exercise DVD's from Dancing to the Oldies with Richard Simmons, to Tai Bo, to Power Yoga. There will be something for everybody. Most of the tapes have someone demonstrating low-impact moves for people with arthritis. You can use these at home and not worry about class schedules, what you are wearing or how you look.

Next month I'll share the difference between exercising for health and for fitness.

Have fun sweating off the calories!

- Dr. Fedak



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